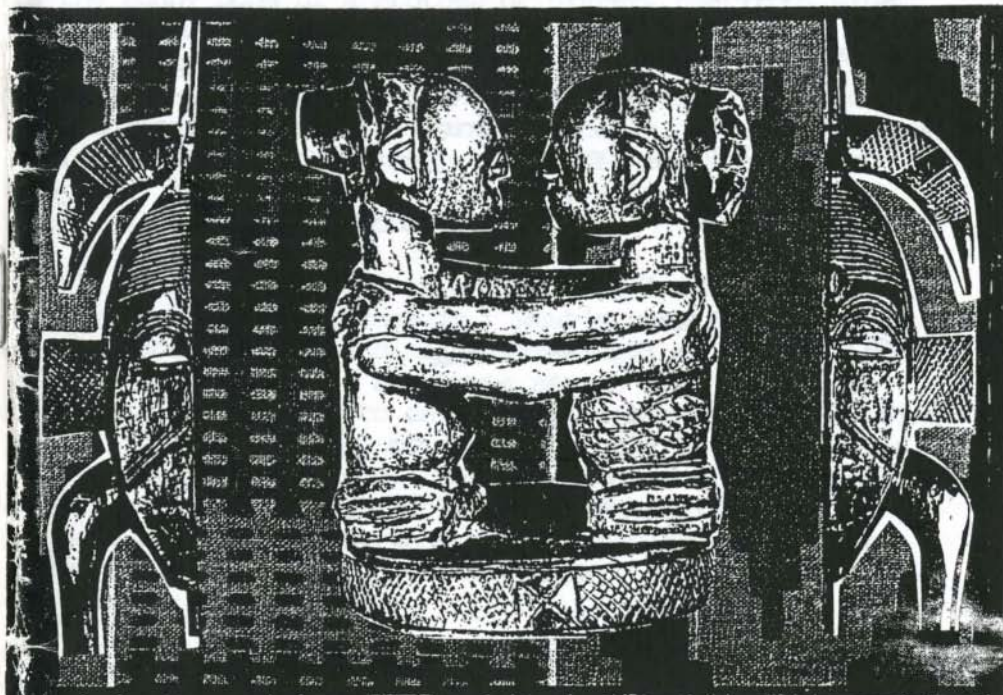


H A R A M B E F L A M E E

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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***HARAMBEE FLAME Editor**

COMMENTARY

"Martin Luther Coon." Is that funny? To a KKK member, or someone with like mentality, it's probably hilarious, a real rib-tickler. But to an African in this country--especially, one who grew up during the civil rights movement--it aint funny worth a damn. Or consider the fact that one of the cops who took part in the infamous brutalization of Rodney King is named "Stacy Koon." That's some hell of an irony. But the effect it might have on a funny bone depends on whose funny bone we're talking about. If it is the funny bone of a Brother or Sister, the irony might evoke a knowing grin because he or she might wonder: "Aint it something that a redneck who gets busted for busting a Brother up has a last name that's pronounced the same as a European-supremacist term his people coined to degrade African people." A European with a redneck mindset, on the other hand, might miss the irony altogether or might get tickled damned near to death.

What's funny? It hinges on who you are and what your particular life experience is. What's humor? It's whatever strikes you as funny and makes you laugh, or at least puts a smile on your face. And humor serves any one or more of several functions: to entertain(for the purpose of being liked, in order to make money, whatever); to cheer people up; to cover a feeling of sadness, anger, or other emotion one is uncomfortable with("laughing to keep from crying"); to make a serious point when overt seriousness wouldn't allow the point to be adequately made; to ridicule or trivialize; etc.

Humor, and the laughter with which we react to it, can be good for us--not only emotionally and psychologically, but physically. Medical research in recent years has indicated that laughter can actually speed recovery from illnesses and injuries. And the ability of a person to find humor in life and to be able to laugh at him or herself is a sign of good emotional and psychological health. But laughter can also be a sign of emotional and/or psychological sickness. If a person is seriously injured or killed in a car wreck, for example, and somebody finds that amusing, we have to ask, "What's wrong with that sucker?"

From the mid to late 1800s through the early 1900s, minstrel shows and related forms of theater were popular among Europeans in this country. In these skits, African people (sometimes portrayed by Europeans in black-face and sometimes played by Africans in black-face) were presented as stupid, foolish in the extreme, emotionally immature, sex-crazed, etc. In some ways, these portrayals of African people simply reflected the images this country's Europeans commonly held of us in their minds. In some ways, they were vehicles to implant and reinforce those stereotypical images. Whether they were holding us in slavery, economically and otherwise depriving us, lynching us, or however else they were dogging us out, Europeans could feel comfortable about and/or justified in whatever treatment they were subjecting us to by being able to see us as mindless characters of their own creation.

But these stereotypical images of African people, and the European-supremacist notions that gave birth to them, were not only of Europeans, by Europeans, and for Europeans. They were also for us. Humor can be a powerful tool of ridicule and trivialization. And while these efforts to ridicule and trivialize us were symptomatic of sickness on the part of their creators, the targets of the ridicule and trivialization, subjected to enough of this, would eventually learn to see themselves as caricatures, as people to be laughed at. With the advent of film and, later, television, European image-makers and pushers had very effective means of polluting African minds on a mass scale. They gave us Step-'n'-Fetch-It on the big screen, then Amos and Andy on the small, and numerous other dim-witted, buffoonish characters.

But roles for Africans in film were usually subordinate--butlers, maids, etc; grinning shuffling, eye-bugging, and head-scratching for European leading men and/or women. We were rarely head-liners. In the early days of television, we were not only rarely the leading characters but were rarely seen at all. But then came the civil rights movement and the "black" power and "black"-is-beautiful movements, coming on the heels of it.



With respect to television in particular, we demanded more faces that looked like ours. In time, we got them--"Good Times," "Sanford And Son," "What's Happenin,'" "The Jeffer- sons," etc. From these and other such t.v. fare, we got such DYNAMITE! role models as J.J., Aunt Esther, and Rerun. Little had we known how funny living in the projects, being out of work, wondering where the next meal was coming from, and other features of being in the class of economic have-nots could be. By making George an obnoxious fool, the writ- ers of "The Jefferisons" were able to trivialize the reality of European-supremacist ideology(racism) and make an Afri- can person's objection to male-female relationships between

Africans and Europeans equivalent to European-supremacist ideology.

Eventually, though, the momentum we had gained, with respect to political and cultural self-awareness, slowed down to damned near a halt. An expanding African middle class, integration, a heightened level of crass materialism in U.S. society at large, and other factors led to a situation in which many of us lost sight of our peoplehood in favor of visions of conspicuous consumerism. In the process, we became less vigilant, less protective of our minds and spirits and the minds and spirits of our children. Television writers, producers, and others in the business seized the time--over time, replacing the silly with the mockingly insane.

If "Sanford And Son" and the "Flip Wilson Show," for example, were of questionable taste, more recent fare, such as "Uptown Saturday Night" and "In Living Color," often left no doubt as to the blatant disrespect for African people held by several of their actors/comics. Now we have "Martin" (fortunately, on its way out), "The Wayans Bros.," "Malcolm And Eddie," etc.

There was a time when African entertainers could attempt to justify their belittling their people for the amusement of Europeans by claiming that they were making "necessary" compromises in order to break into show business, that they were doing what they had to do in order to survive. These days, that nonsense won't cut it. There's B.E.T. (Black Entertainment Television), comedy clubs all over the country, African film-makers with clout in the industry, and other avenues by which African comedians and other entertainers can make names for themselves and careers in their chosen fields.

But we've moved from "Good Times" to the time of "it's all good," a way of saying, on at least one level, that whatever puts the individual into a position of personal advantage/gain is cool. While it's African people in this country who mainly use this saying, we aren't the ones who brought about the philosophy it represents. We don't control the economy, run the advertising industry, produce the major networks' t.v. fare, or otherwise establish what the philosophy

(Cont. on page 10)

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Media Stereotyping of African Males In U.S.

"The negative stereotype that many people have of African-American men is caused to a significant degree by the media, according to William Drummond, a University of California at Berkeley journalist professor and co-author of a recent report on the status of the African-American male in California.

"News media have taken the lead in equating young African-American males with aggressiveness, lawlessness and violence', said Drummond. 'Entertainment media have eagerly taken their cue from the journalists'.

"This false image not only affects race relations, he said, but 'creates a self-fulfilling prophecy for African-American youngsters, whose limits of achievement can be predetermined for them by suggestions in the media'.

"The 200-page report, 'African-American Males: The Struggle for Equality', was prepared by the California Commission on the Status of African-American Males, a group set up five years ago by the California State Legislature. This investigation of the plight of the African-American male in California was the brainchild of State Sen. Barbara Lee (D-Oakland), who at the time was a state assemblywoman...

"In his chapter, Drummond said the media seem fixated on a controversial thesis that arose in the 1970s that there is a 'black pathology', a fundamental weakness in African-American families that can be traced to their experiences as slaves.

"The concept came from social scientists, most of them white, that there is something wrong with the African-American family', he said, 'that slavery broke families up, and that this weakness in the family manifests itself in negative social behavior'...

"The most common stereotype about African-American men is that they engage in drug abuse in disproportionate numbers,

said Drummond.

"In the report, Drummond lists statistics from a U.S. Justice Department-sponsored survey that showed only 6 percent of African-Americans had used cocaine in their lifetime, and that the great majority of respondents--65.5 percent--had used it fewer than 11 times. Among white respondents, 10.6 percent had used cocaine in their lifetimes, with 62.3 percent of those respondents saying they had used it fewer than 11 times...

"African-American youth spend more time in front of the television than do their white counterparts, said Drummond, because it's an inexpensive means of diversion...

"They see very, very few African-Americans, particularly males, who are achievers. It's a dangerous tendency for them to think the only way they can achieve or earn enough is to involve themselves in the illegal economy'.

"A four-year survey that Drummond cites in the report found that most people list athletics, crime and drug abuse when describing the African-American man. About a third of all respondents also said the African-American male was intellectually inferior.

"It is remarkable', said Drummond, 'that African-American respondents are almost completely in agreement with the white respondents when it comes to listing the elements of this negative image'..."

-from "Media Blamed For Negative Stereotyping Of Black Males," pages 13 and 44, May 31 N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS(N.Y., N.Y.)

Project Assists African Students In Illinois Stay In College

..."Enrollment for Black students attending Illinois colleges is down two percent and stagnant since 1991 reveals a report from the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Additionally, 59 percent of Black college freshmen drop out, compared to 37 percent of all public university first-time freshmen, and two-thirds of Black college students are women.

"But with the help from Black Star Project, ...young Black males...will not only enroll in college but, hopefully, will also have a healthy, successful college experience. Last August, Project Manager Phillip Jackson developed a seminar aimed at helping Black males with pre-college preparation, setting and achieving goals, adjusting to cultural differences, and managing distractions in the college environment...

"Mr. Jackson blames the drop out rate on many factors but said the residual affect on Black males is long lasting.

"Within three to six months of going to college, many African American males return to their communities as college dropouts with low morale, low self-esteem and uncertainties about their futures', Mr. Jackson said...He put it succinctly. 'These young men have hit the wall.

"He described 'The Wall' as a set of psychological and sociological factors that young men encounter during their first year of college. These obstacles may include unfamiliar college culture, money management, attitudes, racism, and poor study habits.

"A five-hour seminar titled 'The Wall' teaches young Black males how to overcome these obstacles...

"The seminar also presents college success through the eyes of women mentors and overall strategies for success, using power and hard work...

"[Mr. Jackson said] 'We want to assist male college graduates to successfully move from college to the work world. This not only helps them individually, but also stabilizes and elevates economic conditions in the African American community by building strong, effective family units where African American women have strong men to marry'...

"For information about 'The Wall' and mentor, parental, and youth self-help programs, call Phillip Jackson at (312) 842-3527.

-from "Breaking Through 'The Wall', page 7, June 3 THE FINAL CALL(Chicago, IL.)

Latest On Mumia Abu-Jamal Case

..."Another new brief was filed by Mumia's lawyers on April 23 in which the District Attorney's Office training tape featuring D.A. candidate and former prosecutor Jack McMahon was cited as evidence that Black jurors were illegally kept off of Mumia's jury. The tape describes how to stack a jury with people who will support the prosecution, and particularly focuses on how to unconstitutionally eliminate Blacks from juries, without being overruled later. Mumia, who had 11 of 14 qualified Black jurors stricken by the prosecution during his 1982 trial, is contending the the McMahon tape--made available by D.A. Lynne Abraham as a political dirty trick aimed at McMahon--proves that the exclusion of Blacks from his jury was part of a conscious policy followed by the D.A.'s office, which is spelled out by McMahon in detail. He is asking that his conviction be thrown out on this basis alone--and at minimum that the D.A.'s office turn over the entire prosecution file, as well as all documents relating to policies on jury selection..."

-from "Update On Mumia Abu-Jamal," page 3, #13 FIRST DAY (Philadelphia, PA.)

Democratic Republic Of The Congo: Nation Of Vast Potential

"The Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly known as Zaire, can help keep the peace and assist humanitarian efforts in the region, said Namibian President Sam Nujoma, who wants the government of Laurent Kabila to be given time to put the mineral-rich country on a proper course.

"Mr. Kabila was sworn in as president May 30 and announced a two-year transition to democracy...A commission will write a new constitution by October 1998, with presidential and legislative elections to occur in April 1999, said Mr. Kabila, at his swearing in...

"In a recent scramble for riches, foreign mining moguls, investment banks and firms attempted to stake their claims in the country's mineral treasure chest.

"Nearly 30 representatives of Canadian, British and American investment banks and firms gathered in Lumumbashi April 16, garnering some \$2 billion in deals to mine and develop zinc, copper and cobalt. It is believed that the new Congo republic holds between half to two-thirds of the world's cobalt reserves, as well as vast copper and diamond reserves [Editor's note: According to an article in the June 13 MUSLIM JOURNAL, the country also has large deposits of tin, uranium, silver, tungsten, manganese, gold, zinc, bauxite, diamonds, and other minerals. Additionally, the article states that the country has hydropower potential estimated as 100,000 megawatts.]...

"President Nujoma said he favored international assistance and efforts by Secretary-General Annan to support the Kabila government 'politically, diplomatically and economically, to ensure that peace and stability return to the country'...

"South Africa's Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and several newspapers on the continent have voiced support for Mr. Kabila..."

-from "Give The Congo A Chance, Says Namibia's President," page 13, June 10 THE FINAL CALL

PUZZLE

Across

- 1-Nairobi is the capital of _____.
- 15-Jerry Rawlings is head of the nation of _____.
- 20-The New Black Panther Party, based in TEXAS, has had a number of confrontations with the school board there.
- 28-There is an _____-ore mountain in Swaziland where tools and other evidence of mining were found, indicating mining activity occurring around 39,000 years ago.
- 43-The Black Panther Party was founded by Huey P. Newton and others in the city of OKLAHOMA.
- 50-Kingston, known for its association with reggae music, is in JAMAICA.
- 61-MONTGOMERY, Alabama is one of several southern cities associated with important events during the civil rights era.

Cont. on page 12)

phical or ideological order of the day is or will be. But we've learned to be followers, followers with flair.

Which Bruce Lee flick was it? "Enter The Dragon"? There's a scene where Jim Kelly, playing the role as a martial arts master, is criticized for having an unorthodox style. He responds to the criticism by pointing out that, while his style may be unorthodox, he looks so good in performing it. In "48 Hours," there's a scene in which Eddie Murphy's character is told that, despite the fact that he's wearing a \$500 suit, he's a low-life. He doesn't dispute the characterization of the kind of person he's accused of being but, smiling, boasts about how good he looks. This society lays stuff out for us--language(English), clothes, cars, music, etc.; and we take it on, adding our own stylistic flavor to whatever it is. Eventually, we forget whatever the thing is came from and claim it proudly as our own. During the days of chattel slavery, the slave-masters threw garbage out for us to eat: chittlins, pig feet, etc. To survive, we ate garbage, added our own touches, and later, called this garbage-based "cuisine" "soul food." True, much of what we call "soul food" is actually good for us and some of that we recalled from our dietary practices in the Motherland--greens, yams, melons, etc. But the point is that we accept too much of what this society lays out for us and, too frequently, fail to distinguish what is good for us/in our interest from what is injurious.

But how is humor laid out for us? Obviously, it's produced, put on stage and performed, put on tape, etc. Humor, though, is only humorous if the person listening to and/or watching it is moved to laugh. If a joke, comedy routine, or other attempt at humor is directed at a particular group of people, the comedian might think his or her stuff is funny, as might other people. But the group intended as the butt of the joke might not only fail to find the joke or routine amusing but might feel insulted as well.

Europeans who produce and/or write sit-coms, for example, know that their success hinges on the ability of their shows to make people laugh. They also understand that laughter, like yawning, is contagious. Once they've produced their programs, they lay out humor for us through the laugh-track--taped laughter added to scenes, dialogue, etc. to influence

us into believing we're being amused. When sit-coms and other television programs are taped before audiences, "laugh" and "applause" signs light up. This is, plainly and simply, manipulation. And after awhile, we are conditioned to laugh at material that, under other circumstances, we wouldn't even begin to crack a smile at. After awhile, we are conditioned to find nappy hair, dark skin, scratching when there's no itch, Africanized English, and other features and myths of our existence as Africans funny. We are the butt of jokes and many of us have learned to like it. And because so many of our(?) comedians and other entertainers are unconscious and dedicated to chasing the paper, when the casting call for modern-day minstrels is made, the Chris Rocks, Martin Lawrences, Ellen Cleghorns, et al come out like roaches in the kitchen when the light goes off.

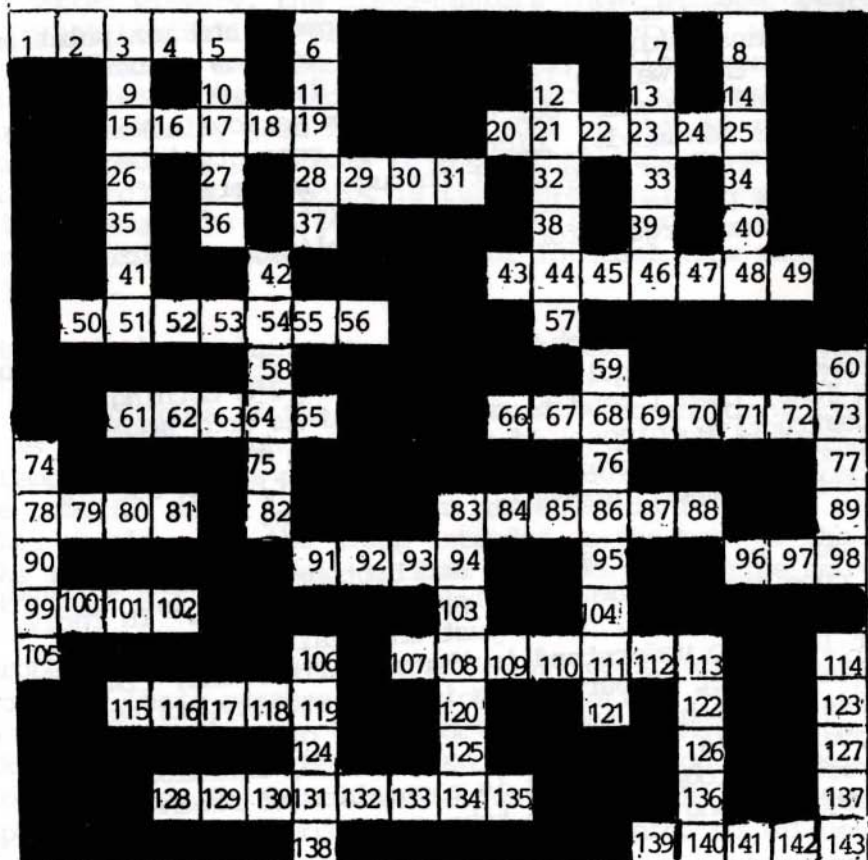
But there's more to this business of comedy and manipulation than Europeans making money. The more we grow accustomed to the idea that we are laughable, the less we value ourselves and recognize our concerns as serious. We become jokes in our own minds. Dignity, self-respect, integrity, etc. escape from us like sweat through the pores of our skin. And a people who lose these qualities of character become greater targets for abuse--by police, politicians, etc.

Just as importantly, such a people become greater targets for individual and collective self-abuse. If I'm nothing more than a joke, then I tend to do silly things and, sometimes, self-destructive things. If my people are a joke, then I have no reason to treat them with respect, look out for their and my common interests, and so forth.

Oftentimes, we see our Sisters and Brothers watching garbage on the tube and ask them why they're watching it. In reply, they're likely to say, "It's just entertainment." But what we must learn to understand is that entertainment, like every other facet of our living in this society, is part of a process by which we lose more and more of our African self-hood. It is in our power to slow and, ultimately, stop this process altogether. It is a question of whether we can stop laughing long enough to take care of serious business.

-Editor

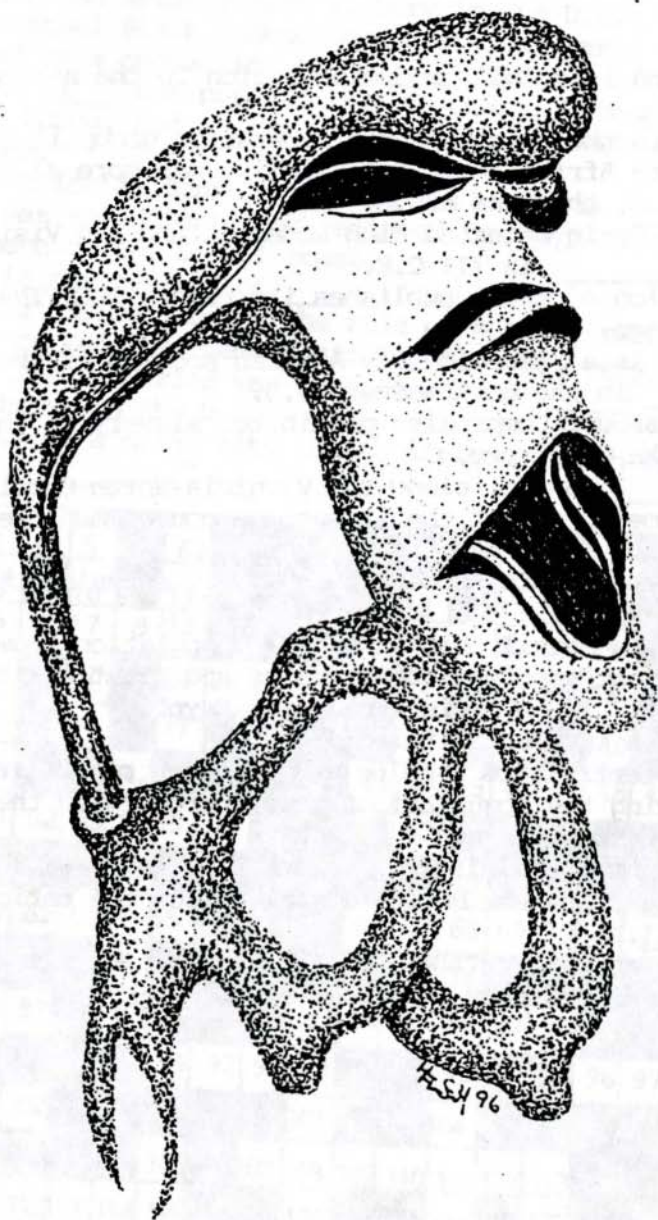
- 66-This Mexican border state, _____, was a refuge for Africans who escaped from slavery in the U.S.
- 78-The National Black Independent Political Party was established at a convention in _____, Indiana.
- 83-Malcolm X was born in 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska.
- 91-Mali, Ghana, and Songhai were well known West African kingdoms.
- 96-In pre-colonial Benin, the king was known as "_____."
- 99-_____ was an ancient land believed by Egyptologists to have been on the Somali coast.
- 107-Dakar is the capital of _____.
- 115-Known as "Zaire" during the rule of Mobutu, this nation is now called the "Democratic Republic of Congo."
- 128-In the 1920s, Harlem was considered the _____ capital of Africans in the U.S.
- 139-Kinshasa is a major city in the African nation formerly known as "_____."



Down

- 3-Ogoniland is an oil-producing region in the nation of _____.
- 5-_____ is the acronym for a liberation group in apartheid-era South Africa that, politically, was more aligned with the P.A.C. than the A.N.C.
- 6-General Tariq defeated King Roderick and his Visigoth armies in _____ in 711 C.E.
- 7-The Nation of Islam publishes its paper, THE FINAL CALL, in Chicago.
- 8-Roxbury is a predominantly African section of the city of _____ in the Northeastern U.S.
- 12-The Missouri Compromise prohibited slavery in the _____-Nebraska Territory.
- 42-The _____ Swamp, along the Virginia-North Carolina border, was home to one of the largest maroon communities in North America.
- 59-Hannibal led his forces from Carthage, crossing the Alps to defeat Rome.
- 60-_____, in Brazil, has an African population known well for its retention of cultural traits and practices from Africa.
- 74-"Kemet" is an ancient name for Egypt.
- 83-Monrovia is the capital of _____.
- 106-South-central Los Angeles was the site of the rebellion following the acquittal of cops charged with the brutalizing of Rodney King.
- 113-The Clinton administration blocked a grant of financial assistance to the Nation of Islam from the nation of _____.
- 114-Nobel Drew Ali established the Moorish Science Temple in Newark, New Jersey in 1913.

KUUMBA



BACK IN TIME

...in Egypt, with time, the formula[magical incantatory] formula] was replaced by medical treatment, and thus medicine was born: the physician replaced the magician...1. There was, besides physicians and magicians, the paramedical body of Sekhmet's priests who guaranteed celestial or miraculous healing as do our marabouts and the saints of the revealed religions, or the water of Lourdes. One could be physician and magician in one. The Egyptian physicians were the ones who first had the idea of taking the pulse.

2. There were general practitioners as well as specialists in different diseases. Medical practice, like the priesthood, was hereditary: just as the priest passed on his knowledge(sacred words, rites, etc.) to the one among his children chosen to succeed him after his death, so did the physician pass on his knowledge on to the son who was to succeed him...the physician could complete his training at an educational institution called the "House of Life," where scholars lived who specialized in the different disciplines, as well as directors of workshops in charge of writing or recopying papyruses...

3. Often, the physicians were officials who, in some cases, gave free treatment: on military expeditions, for instance... The "Smith Papyrus" speaks of forty-eight cases of bone surgery and of external pathology...It is not a collection of prescriptions, but rather a veritable treatise on bone surgery.

The method indicated by the papyrus for the treatment of the dislocation of the lower jaw was copied by Hippocrates and modern scholars...They were the first to practice suturing and to use wooden splints for fractures.

Source: CIVILIZATION OR BARBARISM by Cheikh Anta Diop

ANNOUNCEMENTS

"America's Reconstruction: People and Politics After the Civil War," the first major exhibition ever devoted exclusively to telling the story of Reconstruction, will be on view June 20 through Nov. 1, at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The exhibit includes over 250 artifacts, images and other memorabilia from that period gathered from 35 museums and libraries throughout the country...The exhibition examines the origins of Reconstruction during the Civil War; explores how Black and white Southerners responded to the Confederacy's defeat and the destruction of slavery; traces the political debate between Congress and Pres. Andrew Jackson that led to new Southern governments, in which Blacks participated; and examines the policies of Reconstruction governments and the reasons for their overthrow...The exhibition's co-curators are Eric Foner, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University and the nation's leading authority on Reconstruction, and Olivia Mahoney, curator of Industrial and Decorative Arts at the Chicago Historical Society. Foner and Mahoney are also co-authors of "America's Reconstruction: People and Politics after the Civil War," a catalog being published in conjunction with the exhibition.

Publications: **MOBETTER NEWS:** P.O. Box 1447; South Holland, IL.; 60473. This newspaper is published once every two months and is essentially a forum for Africentric ideas and analysis regarding a wide variety of subject matters--education, politics, spirituality, etc. In addition, it regularly features articles from and about prisons and offers poems and graphics.

BRITE MOMENTS: P.O. Box 90994; Nashville, TN.; 37209. This paper, which also comes out every other month, explores Africentric ideas and has a primarily spiritual focus. A regular feature of this publication is "What If...", in which readers offer poetic visions of how things might be.

HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Afrikans are beautiful in our own right, rather than at the expense of any other group of people. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural awareness is germane to human growth.

NGUZO SABA (Seven Principles)

Umoja - Unity

Kujichagulia - Self-determination

Ujima - Collective work & responsibility

Ujamaa - Cooperative economics

Nia - Purpose

Kuumba - Creativity

Imani - Faith